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ACTION ARA-01

INFO   LOG-00   ACDA-15   AMAD-01   CIAE-00   C-01   HA-09   H-01
       INRE-00   INR-01   L-03   ADS-00   NSAE-00   NSCE-00 OMB-01
       PA-01   PM-01   PRS-01   P-01   SNP-01   SP-01   SS-01
       TRSE-00 T-01   USIE-00   /041W
                ------------------1CB396   191627Z /38
R 191531Z MAR 92
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4273   RELEASED IN FULL
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 02705

CINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, MCAP, AR
SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE
-          "DESTABILIZATION"

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT

2. DEFENSE MINISTER ERMAN GONZALEZ IS CONCERNED ABOUT
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WHAT HE CONSIDERS ORGANIZED MEDIA ATTACKS WHICH COULD
AFFECT THE STABILITY OF ARGENTINE DEMOCRACY. GONZALEZ
EXPRESSED HIS FEARS DURING A MARCH 16 DINNER WITH THE
AMBASSADOR HOSTED BY CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES PRESIDENT
ALBERTO PIERRI (OTHER GUESTS INCLUDED CORDOBA CARDINAL
PRIMATESTA, UN AMBASSADOR JORGE VASQUEZ, FORMER
PRESIDENTIAL PRIVATE SECRETARY MIGUEL ANGEL VICCO,
PROMINENT BUSINESSMEN JORGE ANTONIO AND HUGO FRANCO,
AND POLCOUNS). THE MINISTER CITED THE RECENT STRING
OF NEGATIVE STORIES IN THE LOCAL MEDIA (E.G., SECURITY
AT EZEIZA AIRPORT, CORRUPTION, POLITICIZATION OF THE

JUDICIARY, CHOLERA OUTBREAKS, AND THE SUPPOSED DISPUTE
BETWEEN HIMSELF AND ECONOMY MINISTER CAVALLO OVER
AIRPORT SERVICES MONOPOLIES) AS THE BASIS FOR HIS
CONCERNS.

3. GONZALEZ AVERRED THAT WHILE THE TOP MILITARY
LEADERSHIP WAS SUPPORTIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE
MILITARY COMBINED WITH POOR PAY AND LACK OF OTHER
BENEFITS WAS CAUSING WORRISOME UNREST AMONG THE LOWER
RANKS. HIS PRIMARY CONCERN, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT
EXPRESS ANY IMMEDIACY, WAS THAT A SMALL GROUP OF NCOS
AND OTHERS MIGHT SEIZE ONE BARRACKS TO PUBLICIZE THEIR
GRIEVANCES AND THEN BE FOLLOWED BY SIMILAR UPRISINGS
IN OTHER POSTS.

4. GONZALEZ OPINED THAT THE STORIES IN THE MEDIA
"CAMPAIGN" SEEMED TOO WELL ORGANIZED AND TOO NUMEROUS
TO BE MERELY COINCIDENTAL. HE SAID THAT IT RESEMBLED
THE TYPE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTION THAT COULD BE AIMED
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AT PREPARING PEOPLE FOR ACCEPTING GOVERNMENTAL CHANGE
AND AT JUSTIFYING SUCH AN ACTION BY DISCREDITING THE
DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AND THE GOVERNMENT (MENEM'S) IT HAD
PRODUCED. GONZALEZ CONSIDERED THE RASH OF STORIES TO
BE DESTABILIZING AND WORTHY OF SPECIAL ATTENTION. HE
WAS ALSO CONCERNED THAT SUCH STORIES PROMOTED AN IMAGE
OF INCOMPETENCE AND CHAOS ON WHICH EXTREMIST ELEMENTS
COULD PLAY, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE "MARGINALIZED" AND
THOSE WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES MOST NEGATIVELY AFFECTED
BY THE GOVERNMENT'S REFORM POLICIES.

5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT GONZALEZ DID NOT HAVE
ANY SPECIFIC, HARD INFORMATION ON AN IMPENDING
MILITARY MOVE. RATHER, HE PROBABLY WAS UNLOADING A
TROUBLED MIND AFTER WEEKS OF TOUGH SLEDDING IN THE
MEDIA IN WHICH HE HAD FIGURED PROMINENTLY (THE
REPORTED DISPUTE WITH CAVALLO AND FAA/EZEIZA SECURITY
FLAP). NEVERTHELESS, THE NUMBER OF NEGATIVE STORIES
IN THE PAST MONTH HAS BEEN EXTRAORDINARY AND, IF TAKEN
OUT OF CONTEXT, WOULD GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE
SITUATION IN ARGENTINA IS FAR WORSE THAN IT REALLY
IS. WHILE MANY OF THE PROBLEMS REFERRED TO ARE INDEED
SERIOUS, THEY ARE NOT EXPECTED TO SPARK ANY MAJOR
POPULAR DISCONTENT. ON THE CONTRARY, ARGENTINA

REMAINS REMARKABLY STABLE WHEN COMPARED TO JUST ONE
YEAR AGO. WHILE THE POSSIBILITY OF A SMALL, SUDDEN
RISING BY THE MILITARY LOWER RANKS CANNOT BE RULED
OUT, WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT IT WOULD SPREAD OR HAVE
ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS. THE MENEM GOVERNMENT HAS DEALT
SUCCESSFULLY WITH SUCH THREATS IN THE PAST, AND THE
MILITARY AND CIVILIAN POPULATION IN GENERAL ARE EVEN

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MORE INCLINED TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT TODAY.
UNFORTUNATELY, THE DEADLY MARCH 17 BOMBING OF THE
ISRAELI EMBASSY (SEPTEL) COULD ADD TO THE MINISTER'S
FEARS. TODMAN

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